EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE

QUESTION PERIOD

Minute No. 350
Councillor Thomas advised that there were 12 programs operating at Kelvin Community Centre with over 100 volunteers. She questioned when the volunteer heads of the various programs would be called and told what alternative sites they could operate their programs at.

His Worship Mayor Katz stated it was his understanding that many of the groups have been contacted by the Community Services Department and that as a result of her question, he would communicate with the department to verify that the groups have been communicated with and spoken to.

Councillor Thomas referenced a program that was operated by the Greater Council of Winnipeg Community Centres (GCWCC) for three months out of Glen Elm School. She advised that they closed it, not for lack of participation, but because it was too expensive to operate out of the school. Councillor Thomas questioned where the drop-in program would happen for the kids after school.

His Worship encouraged Councillor Thomas to explore opportunities for the program with the GCWCC since she would know the area better than anybody else and would likely have suggestions.

Councillor Vandal stated that Budget '09 has a projected deficit of $38 million dollars and questioned what the plan was relative to business taxes and property taxes for Budget '09.

His Worship advised that work has begun on Budget '09 and that as soon as specifics were available, he would share those with the Councillor. He further advised that the public service along with the guidance and leadership of the CAO and CFO, were working on the budget and asked for patience to allow time for solutions to be developed.

Councillor Vandal questioned if there had been any directives given to the administration on targets for departmental budgets for the year 2009 to which His Worship replied there had not been.

Councillor Vandal questioned when the next Plan Winnipeg review would be rolled out and if there would be public consultations in that regard.

His Worship replied that the process had begun and that the Province was involved to ensure the process had the proper funding and to ensure a successful review of Plan Winnipeg.

Executive Policy Committee - Question Period (continued)

Councillor Wyatt noted that His Worship had fought and won to receive gas tax funding from the Federal Government and had also received an extra 10% on top of gas tax funding. He questioned when the Premier and the Provincial Government were going to realize that a major shift with regards to funding and supporting the municipalities in the Province was required.

His Worship replied that the funding mechanisms in place for cities and municipalities in Manitoba were not working. He noted that the majority of the population now lived in urban centres as opposed to rural centres and that Mayor's and Reeves from across the Province believed that the system needed a change. He further stated that he hoped to work face to face with the Premier to see if they could find a solution to the true problem of what ailed the City, noting that the problems had been caused by decades of neglect and under funding. He noted that municipalities required a fair deal and that this was something he intended to work very hard at this year, hopefully in concurrence with other leaders in the Province.

Councillor Wyatt commented that the Province was receiving billions in unallocated funding from Ottawa and questioned when the Premier would start to correct the provincial municipal funding imbalance that existed and begin to do the right thing and fund municipalities the way that was required.

His Worship stated that he agreed with what Councillor Wyatt was talking about regarding transfer payments, and that he would continue to negotiate to have more monies shared with the City of Winnipeg with no strings attached.

Councillor Browaty noted that the Provincial Budget committed one-third funding of the City's wastewater improvements and attached a figure of $256 million dollars to it. He further stated that the actual number to improve the wastewater system, both in terms of the plants as well as combined sewers was probably closer to $1.8 billion dollars. He questioned that if the Province was committing one-third, had there been any change in what type of upgrades were required?

His Worship stated the Clean Environment Commission had stated that all three levels of government should be participating equally and at that point in time, the working number was $1.2 billion dollars, so the minimum commitment from the Province should have been $400 million. He further stated that it would have to be determined if the $256 million figure was just a down payment on the one-third commitment.